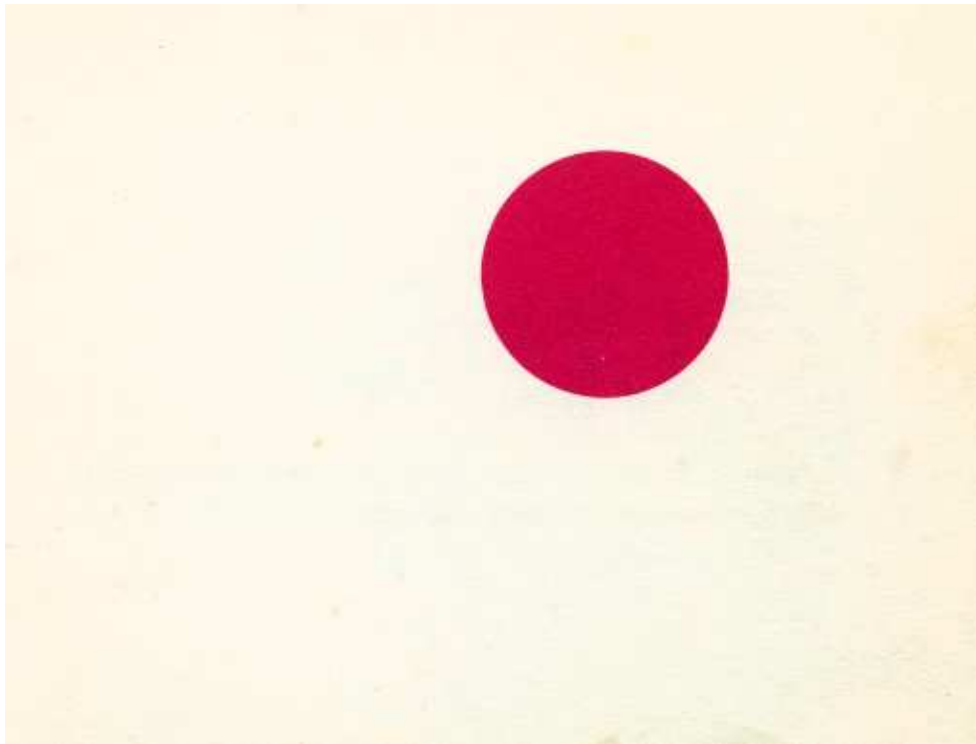


*For Euclid, no matter what they say.*

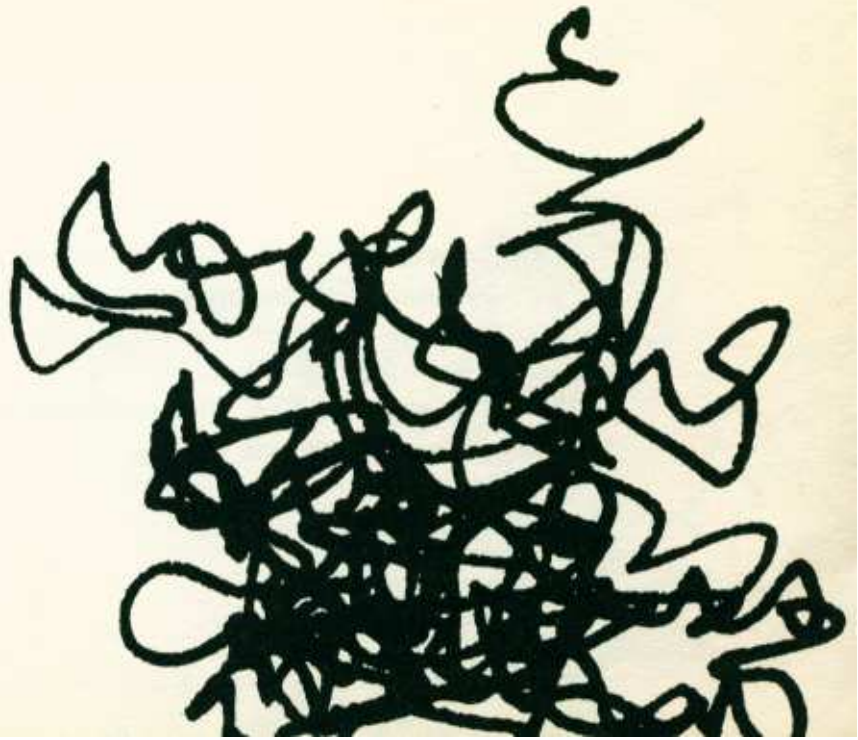


with a dot.

“You’re the beginning and the end, the hub, the core and the quintessence,” he told her tenderly, but the frivolous dot wasn’t a bit interested,

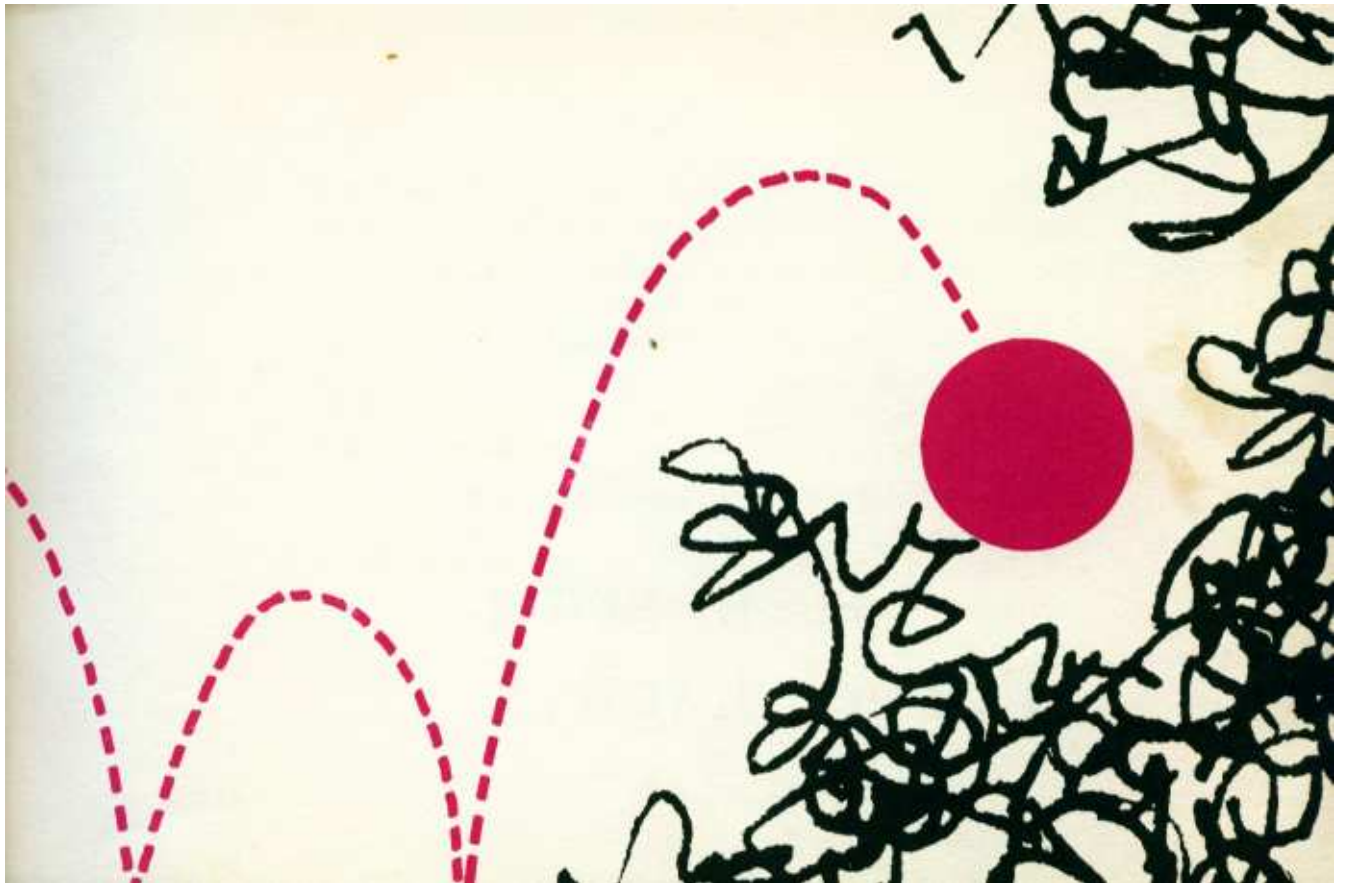


for she only had eyes for a wild and unkempt squiggle  
who never seemed to have anything on his mind at all.



They were everywhere together, singing and dancing and frolicking and laughing and laughing and lord knows what else.

"He is so gay and free, so uninhibited and full of joy," she informed the line coolly,



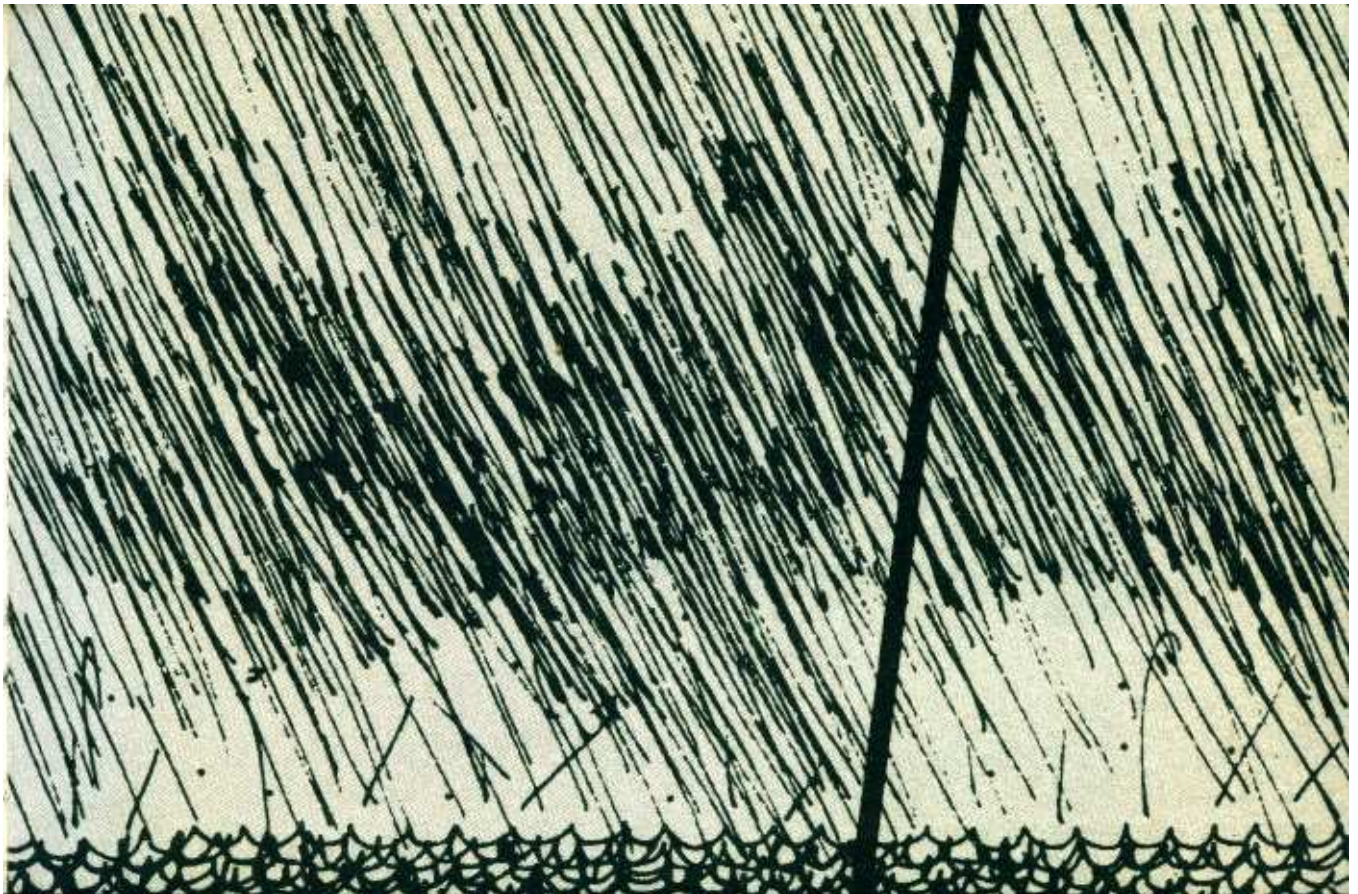
"and you are as stiff as a stick. Dull. Conventional and repressed. Tied and trammeled. Subdued, smothered and stifled. Squashed, squelched and quenched."

"Come around when you get straightened out, kid," the squiggle added with a rasping chuckle, as he chased her into the high grass.

"Why take chances," replied the line without much conviction. "I'm dependable.

I know where I'm going.  
I've got dignity!"





But this was small consolation for the miserable line. Each day he grew more and more morose. He stopped eating or sleeping and before long was completely on edge.

His worried friends noticed how terribly thin and drawn he had become and did their best to cheer him up.

“She’s not good enough for you.”

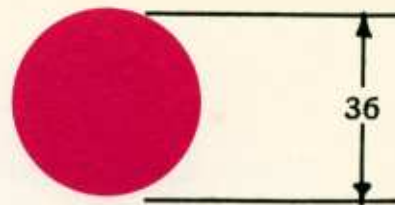
“She lacks depth.”

“They all look alike anyway. Why don’t you find a nice straight line and settle down?”

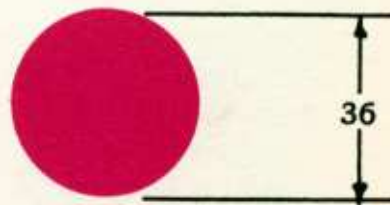


But he hardly heard a word they said. Any way he  
looked at her she was perfect.

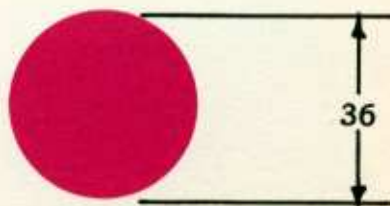
*Top*



*Side*



*Front*

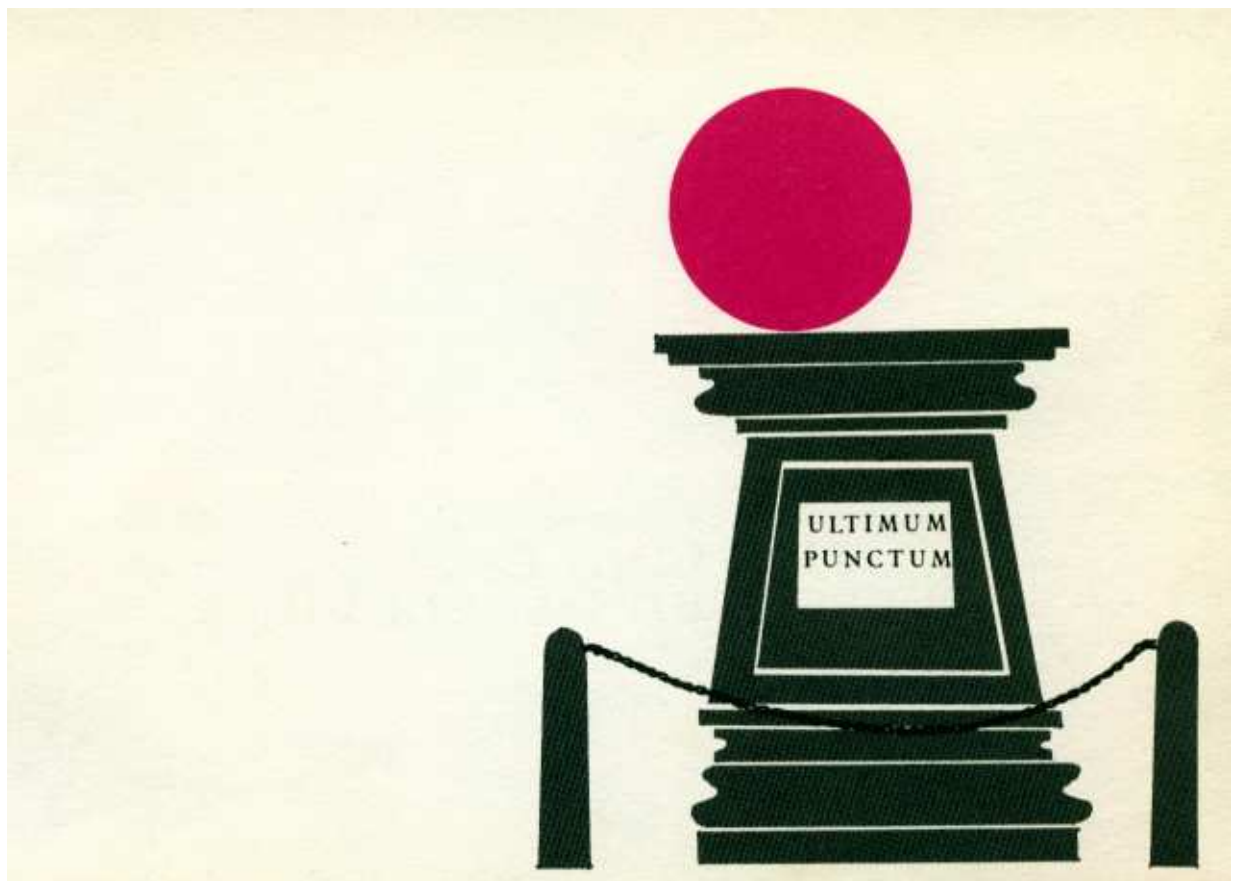




He saw things in her that no one else could possibly imagine.

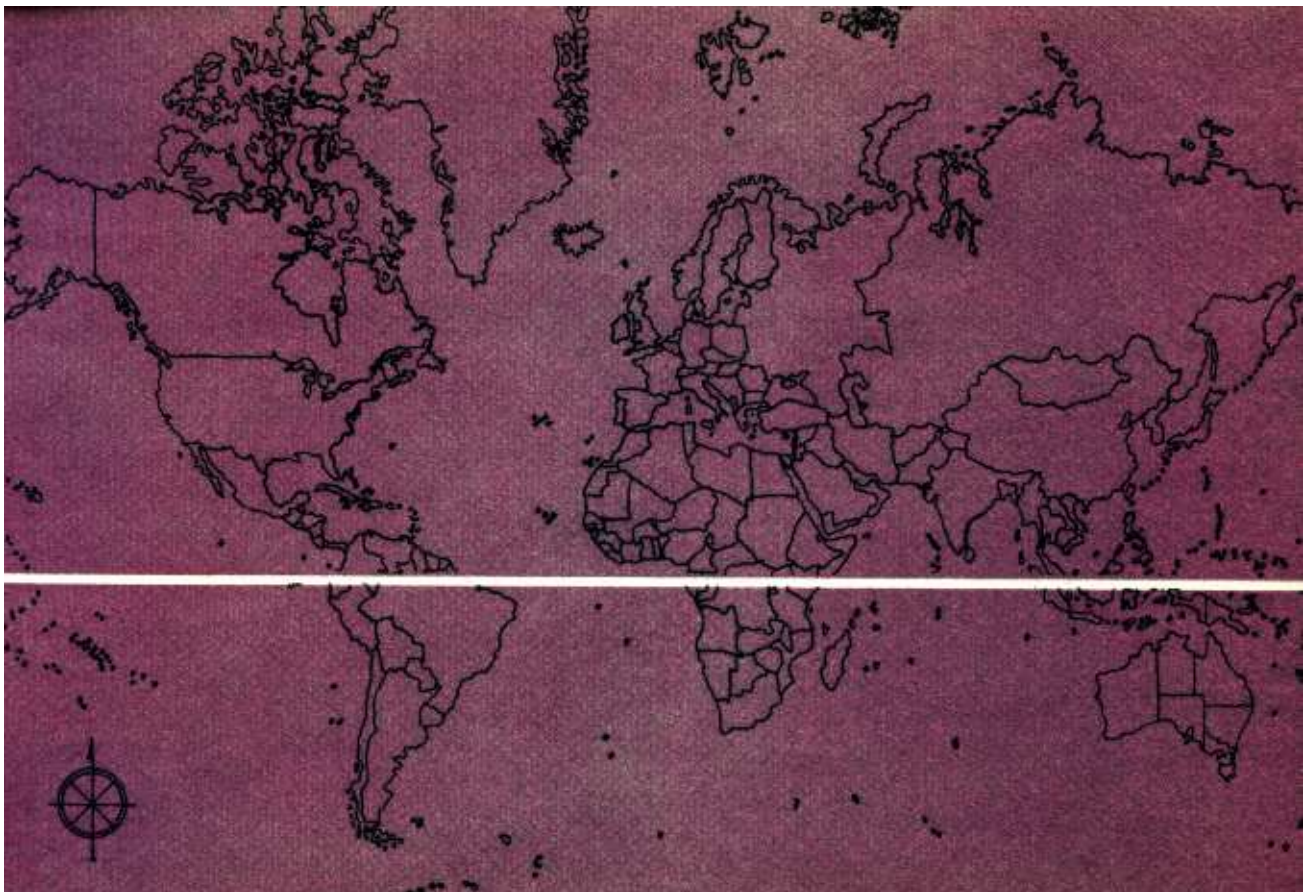
"She is more beautiful than any straight line I've ever seen," he sighed wistfully, and they all shook their heads. Even allowing for his feelings they felt this was stretching a point.

And so he spent his time dreaming of the inconstant dot and imagining himself as the forceful figure she was sure to admire —





THE LINE AS A  
CELEBRATED DAREDEVIL

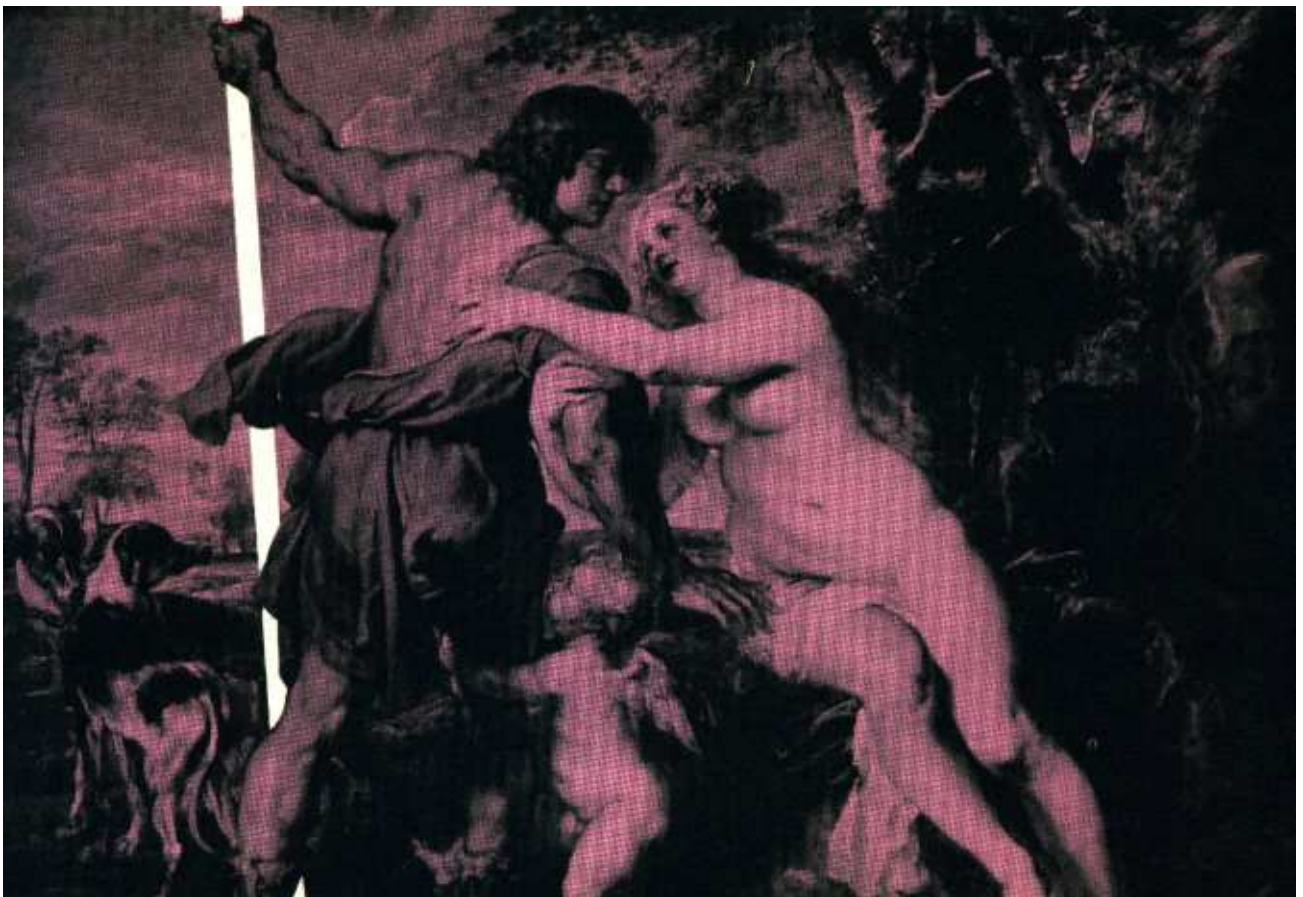


THE LINE AS A FEARLESS  
LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENT



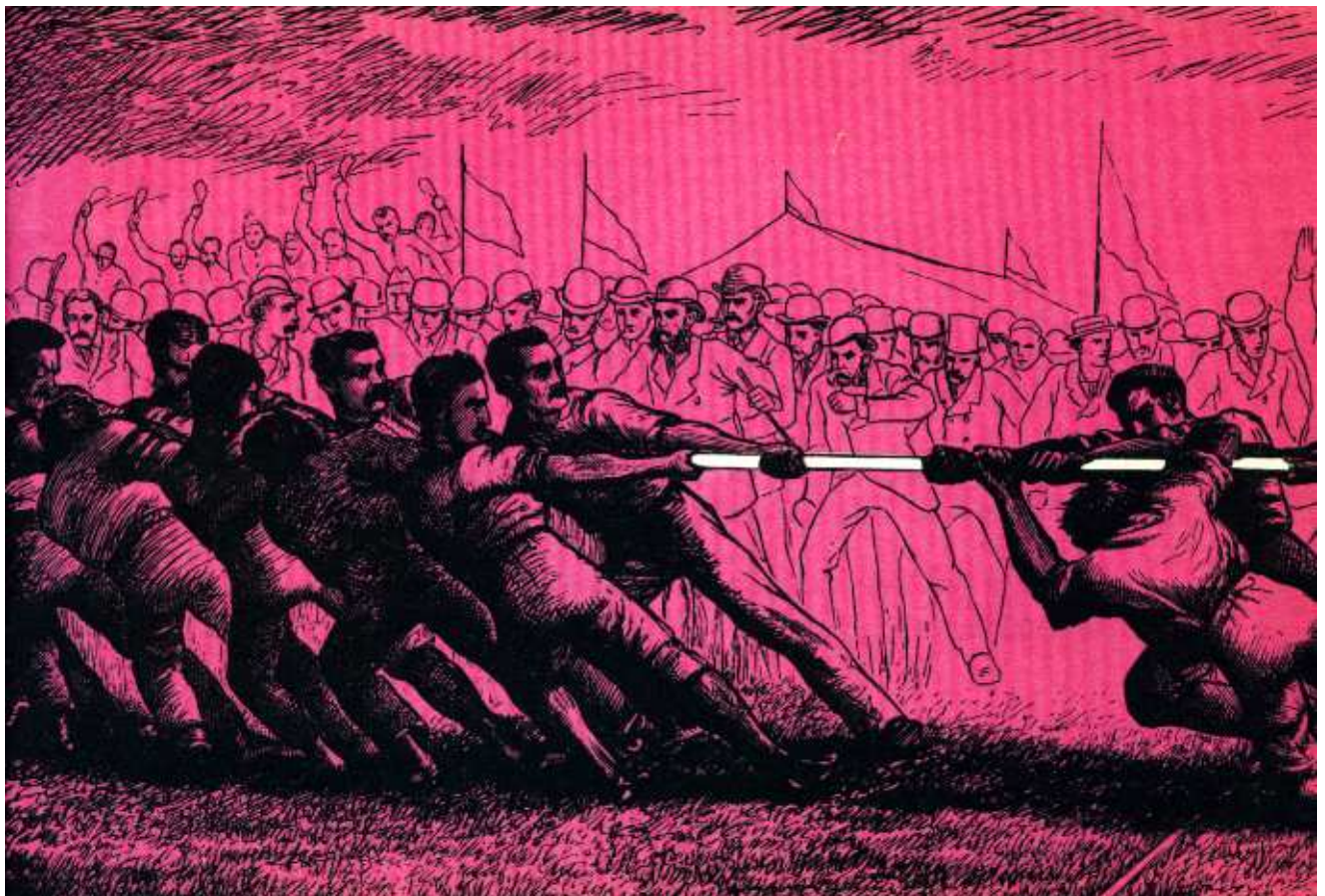


THE LINE AS A POTENT  
FORCE IN THE WORLD OF ART





THE LINE AS AN  
INTERNATIONAL SPORTSMAN



But he soon grew tired of self-deception and decided that perhaps the squiggly line might have the answer after all.

"I lack spontaneity. I must learn to let go, to be free, to express the inner passionate me."

But it just didn't make any difference, for no matter how often, or how hard he tried,



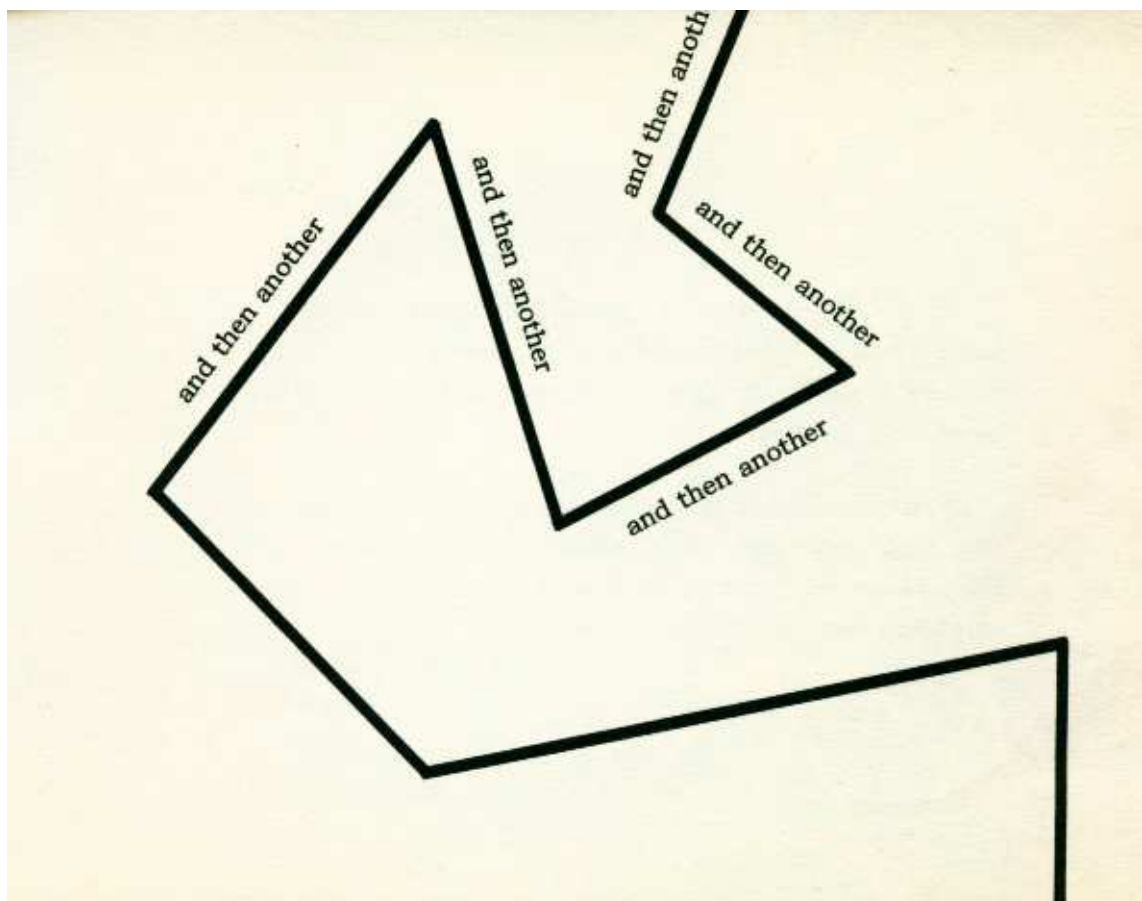
he always ended up the same way.

And yet he continued trying and failing and trying again. Until when he had all but given up, he discovered at last that with great concentration and self-control he was able to change direction and bend wherever he chose. So he did, and made an angle.



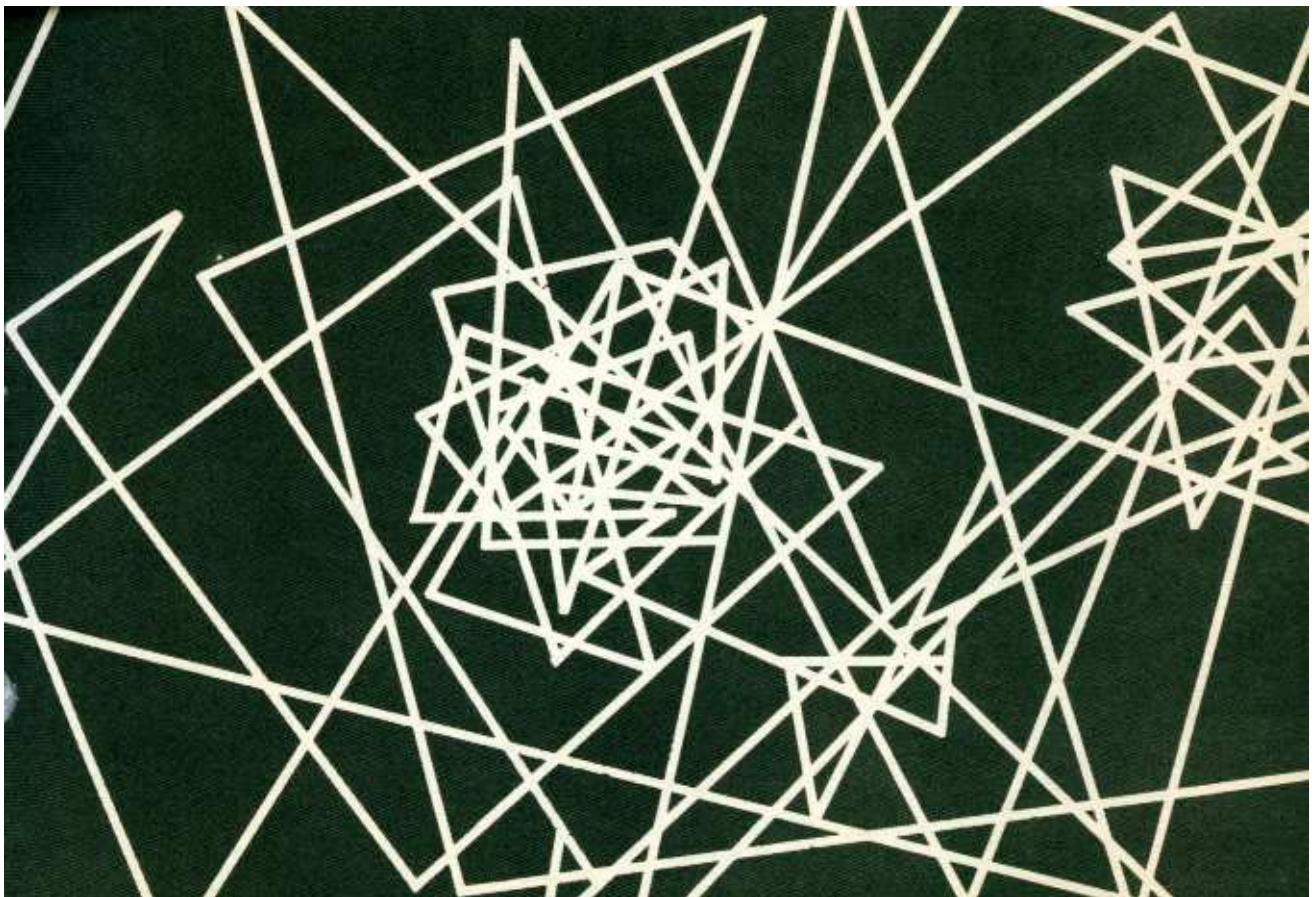


**And then again and made another**



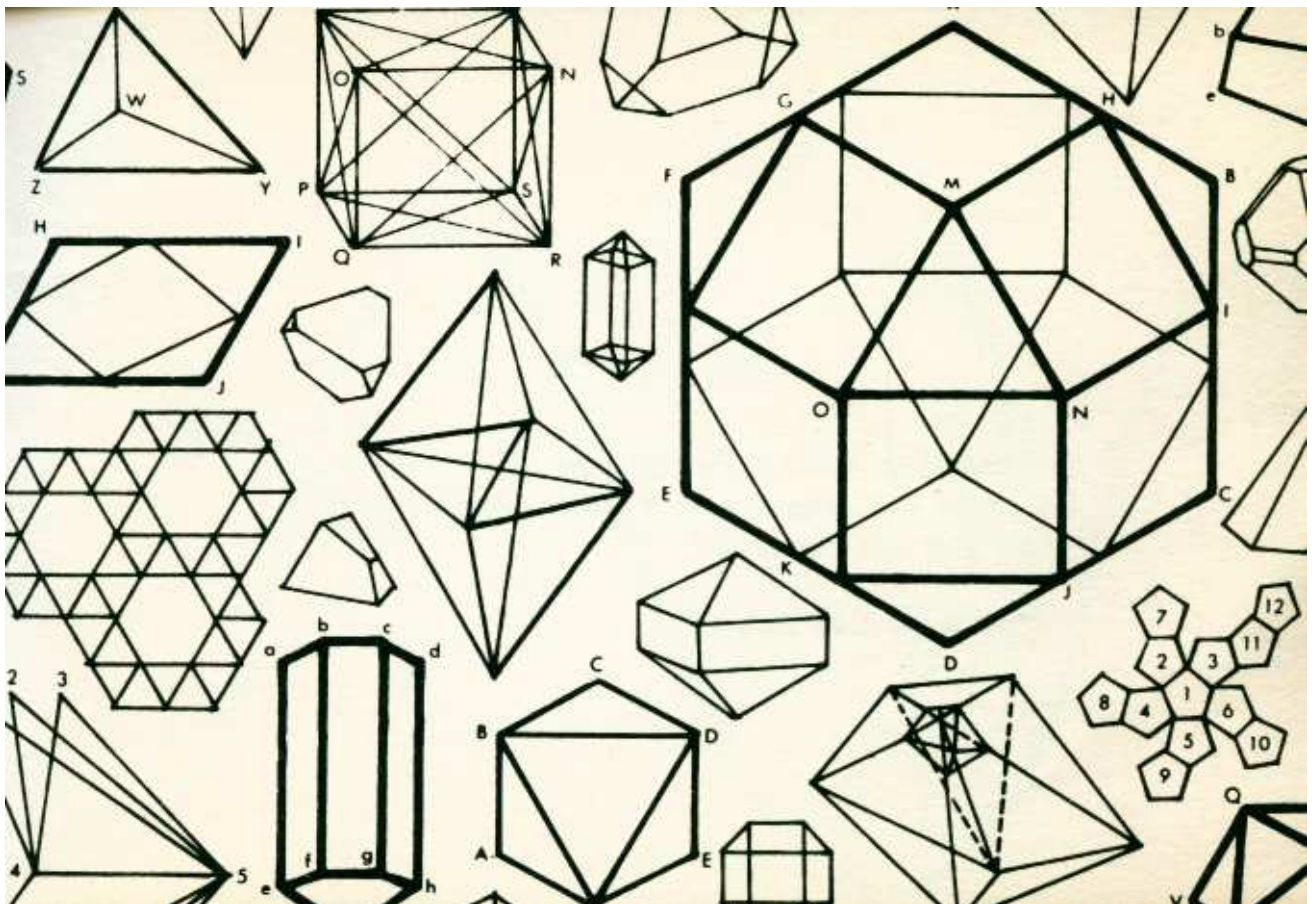
"Hot stuff," he shouted, much impressed with his efforts. Then in a wild burst of enthusiasm he sat up for half the night putting on an outrageous display of sides, bends and angles.

"Freedom is not a license for chaos," he observed the next morning. "Ooh, what a head." There and then he decided not to squander his talents in cheap exhibitionism.





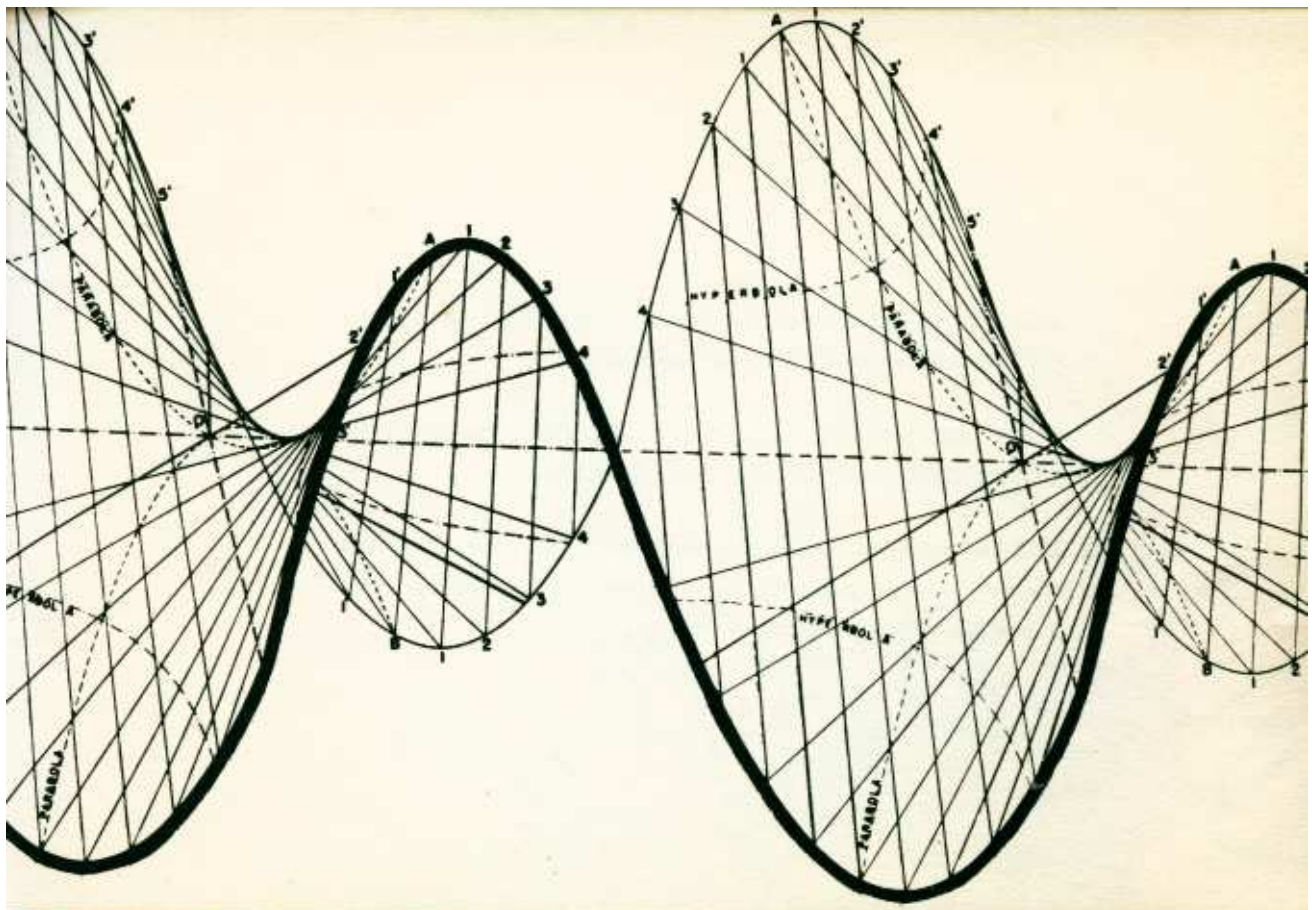
For months he practiced in secret. Soon he was making squares and triangles, hexagons, parallelograms, rhomboids, polyhedrons, trapezoids, parallelepipeds, decagons, tetragrams and an infinite number of other shapes so complex that he had to letter his sides and angles to keep his place.





Before long he had learned to carefully control ellipses, circles and complex curves and to express himself in any shape he wished —

“You name it, I’ll play it.”



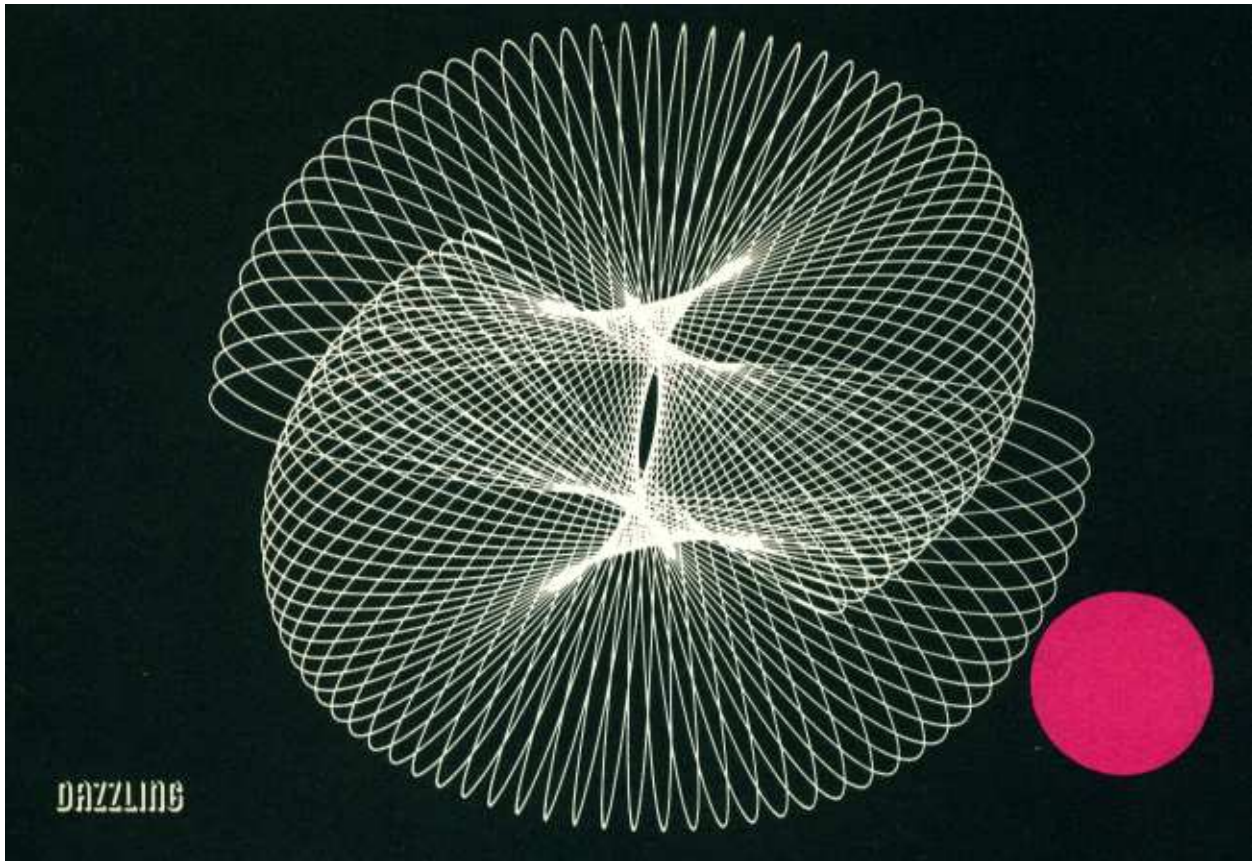
But all his successes meant nothing to him alone and so off he went to seek the dot once again.

"He doesn't stand a chance," muttered the squiggle in a voice that sounded like bad plumbing.

But the line, who was bursting with old love and new confidence, was not to be denied. Throughout the evening he was by turns —

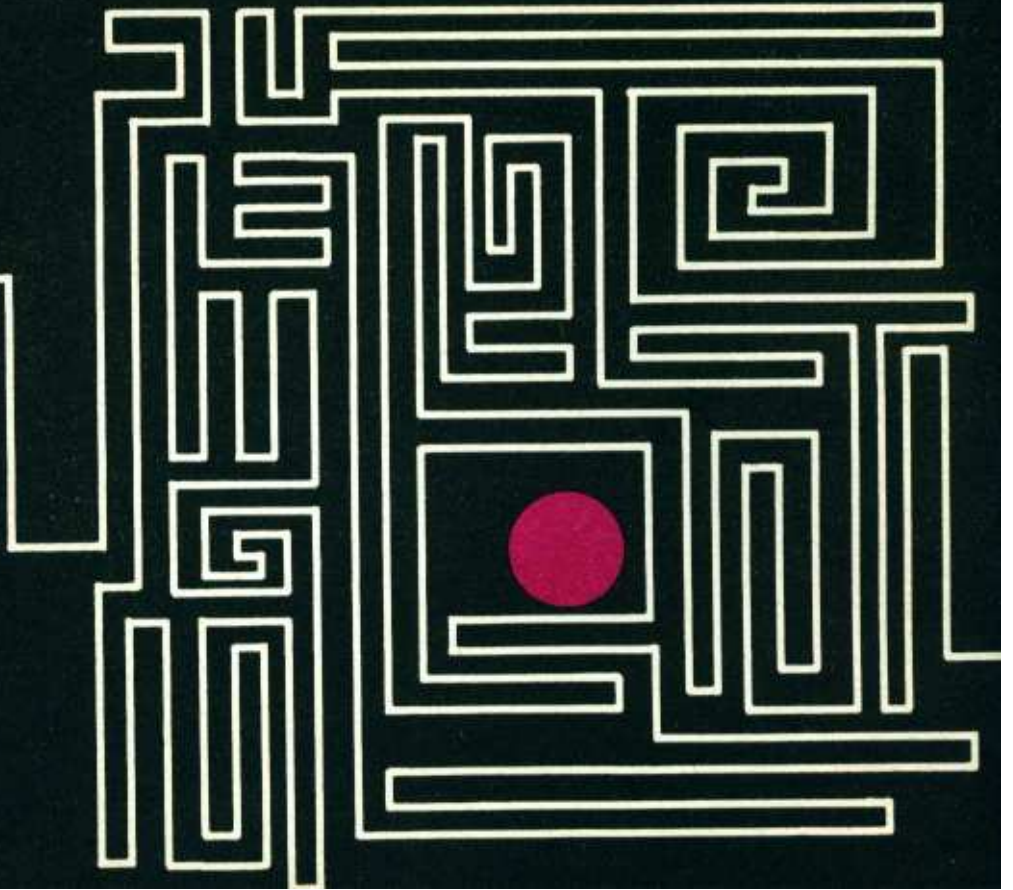




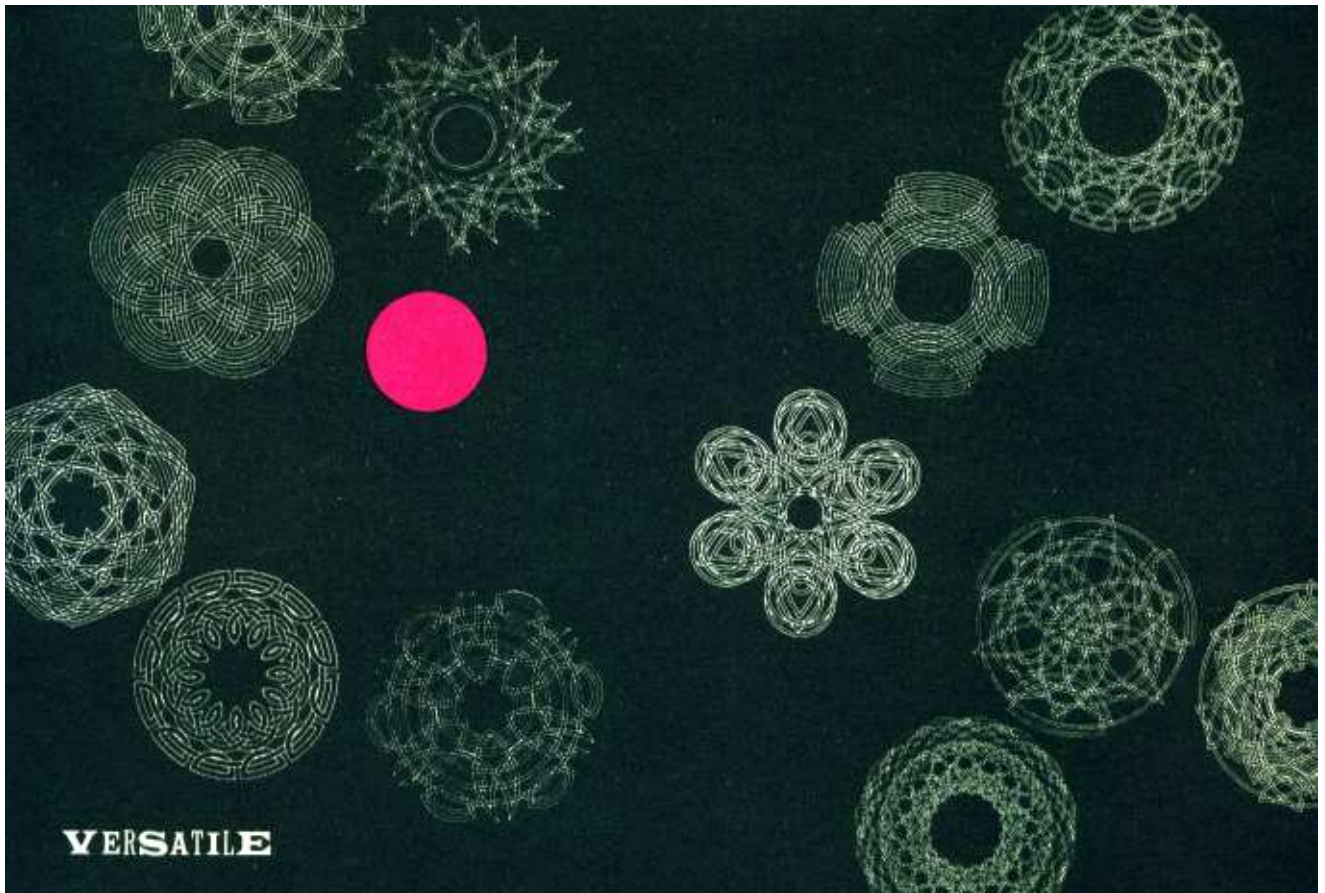




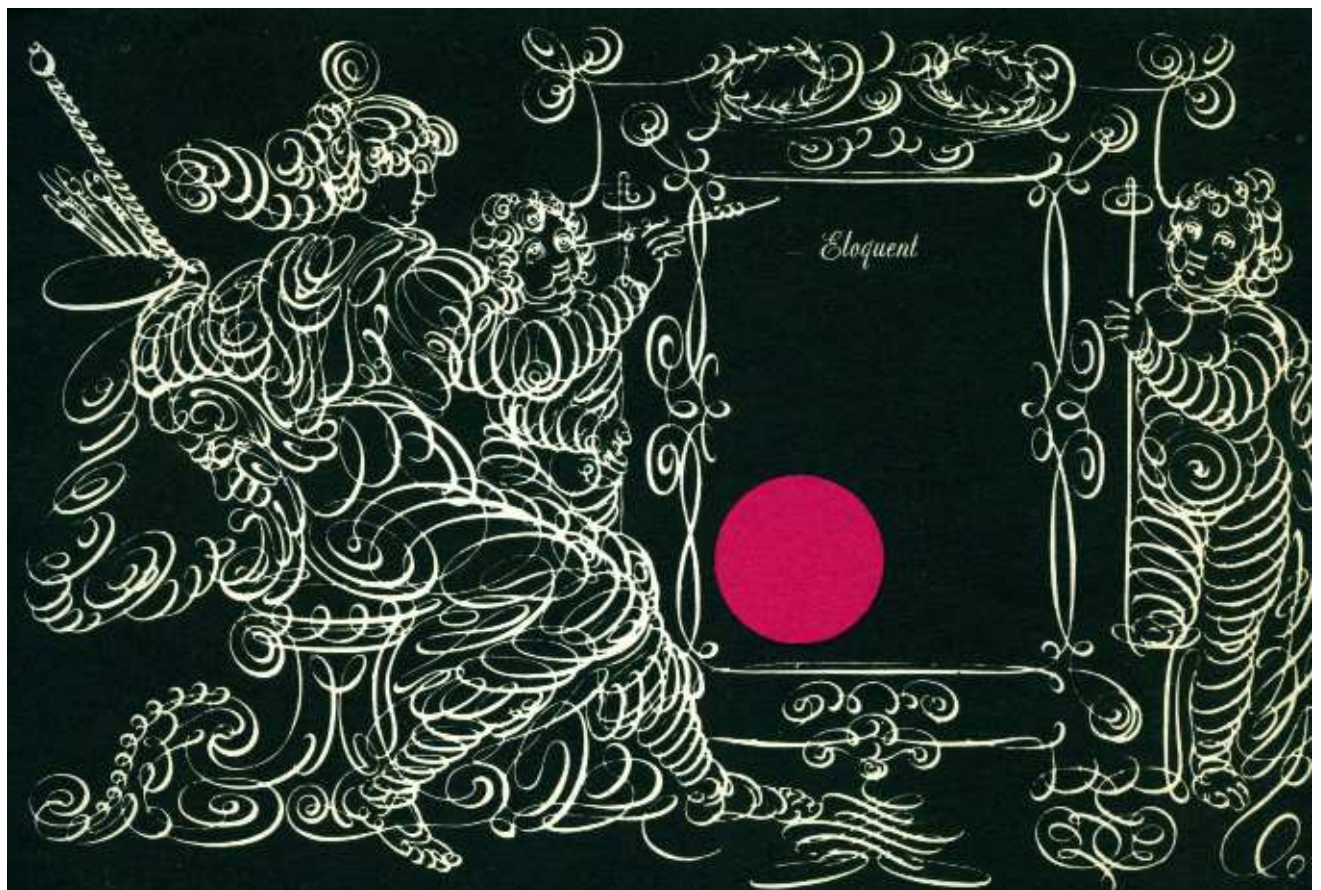
Mysterious



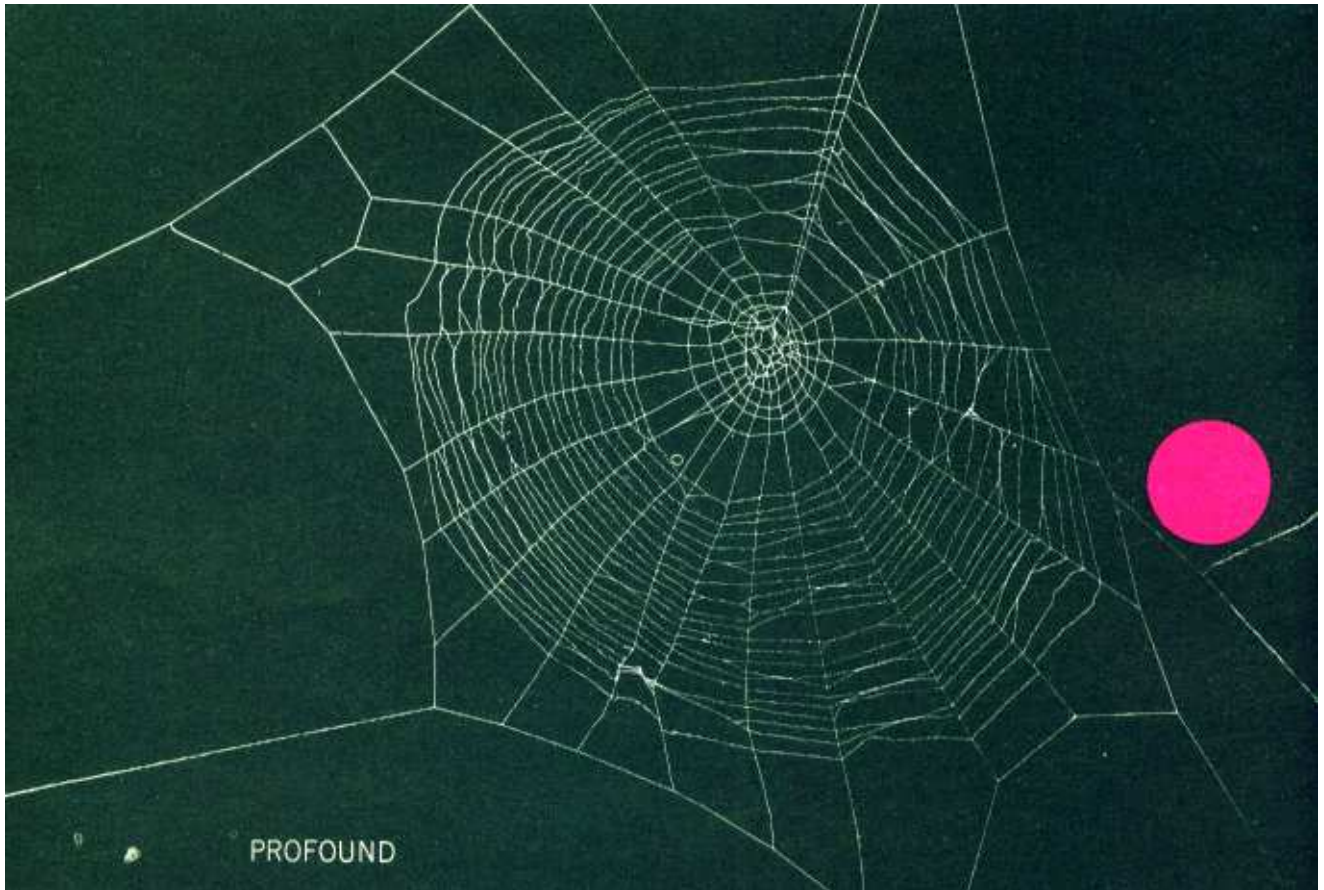
VERSATILE



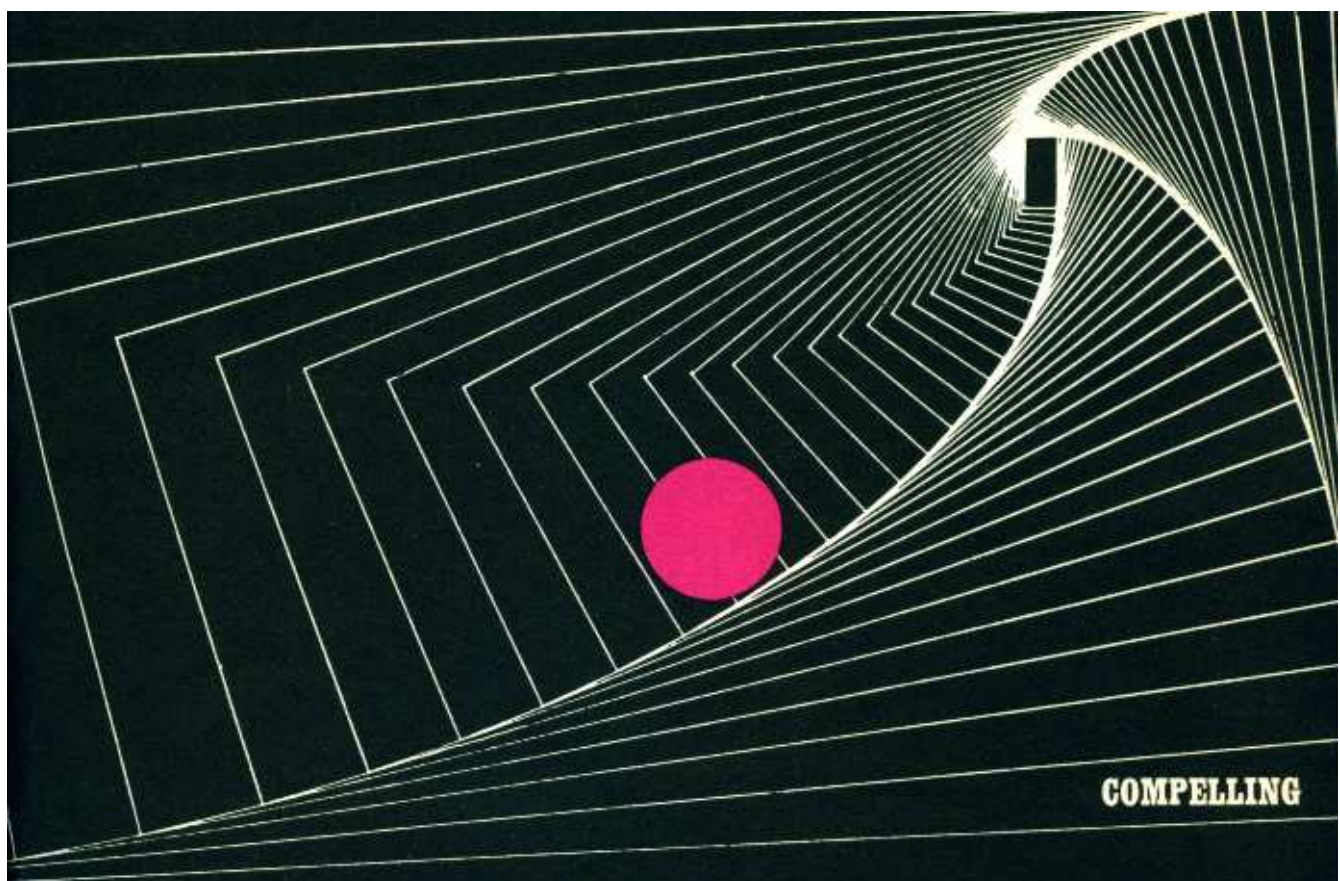
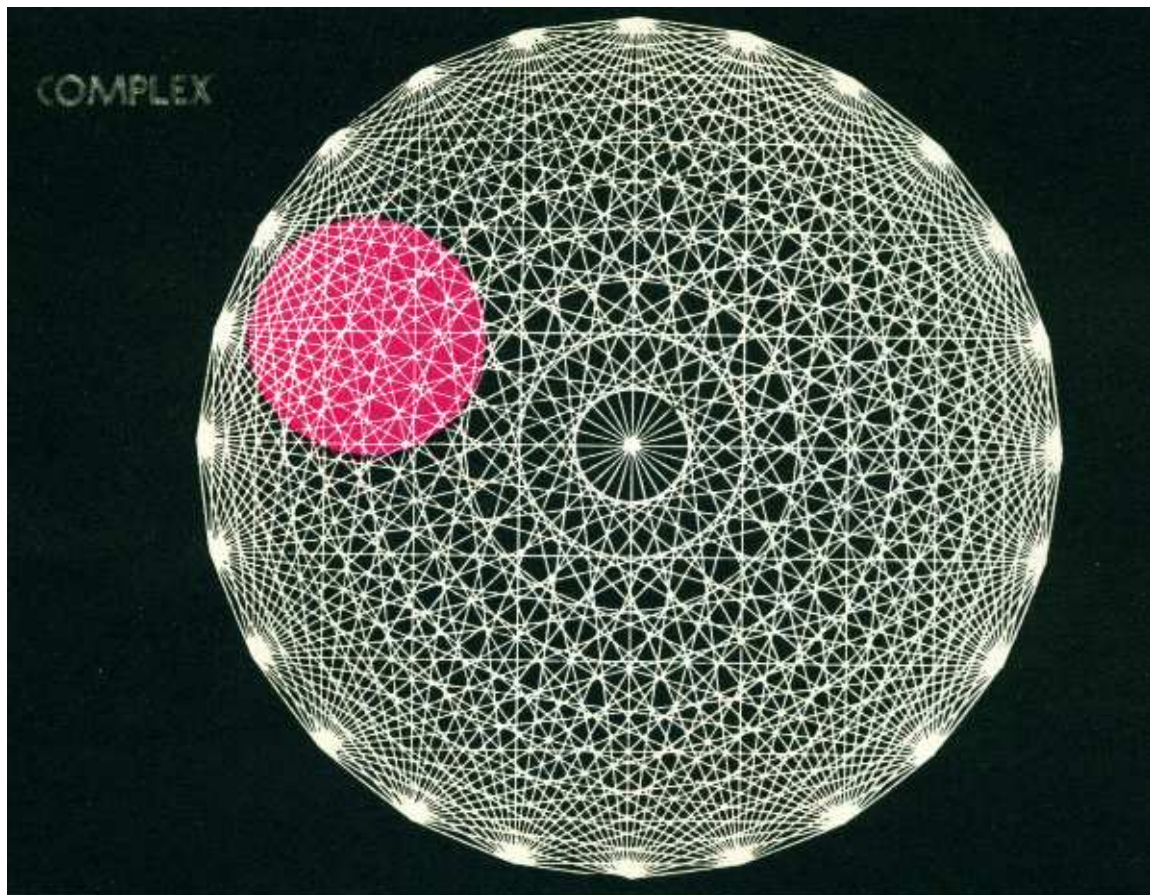












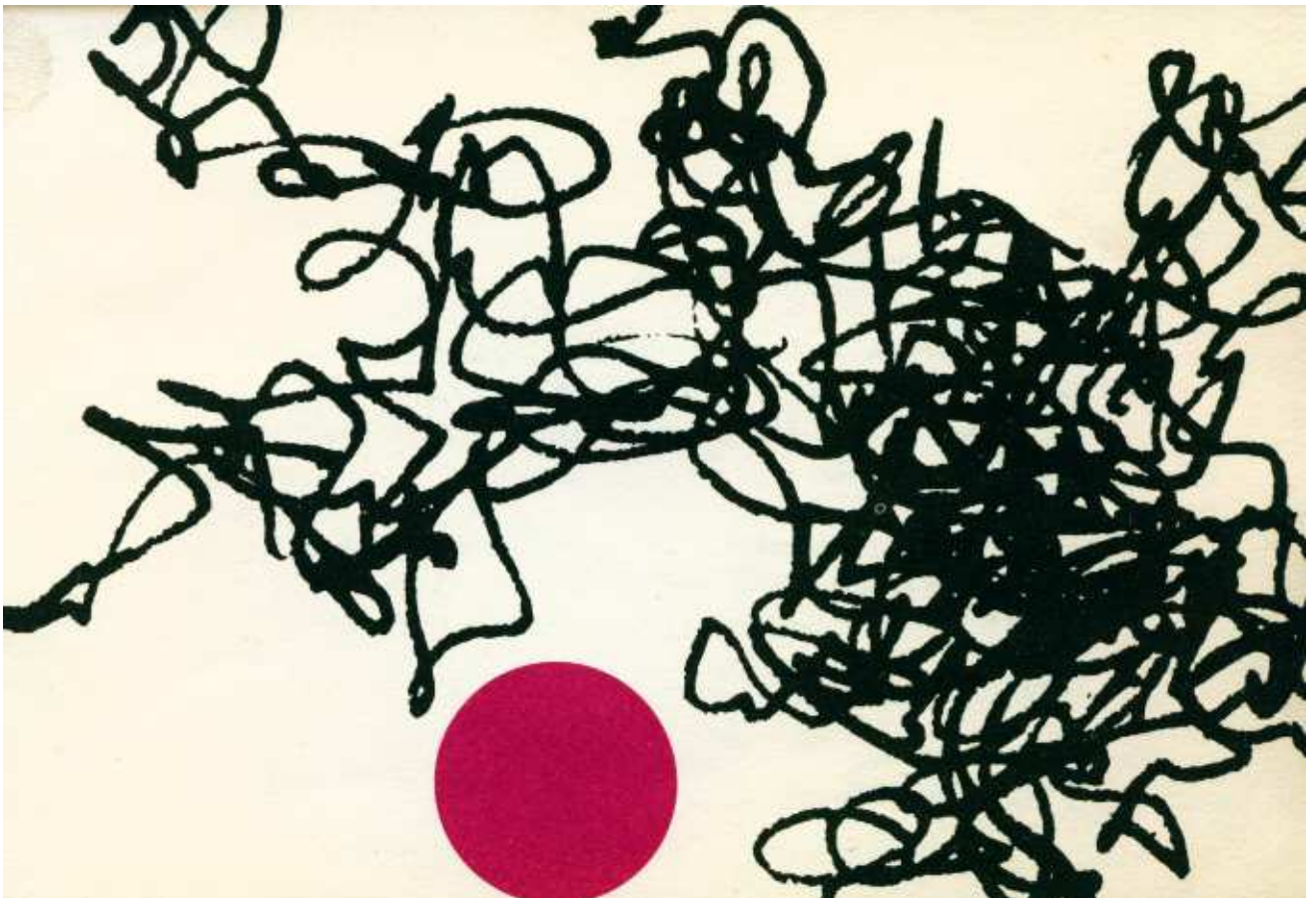
COMPELLING



The dot was overwhelmed. She giggled like a school-girl and didn't know what to do with her hands. Then she turned slowly to the squiggle, who had suddenly developed a severe cramp.

"Well?" she inquired, trying to give him every chance.

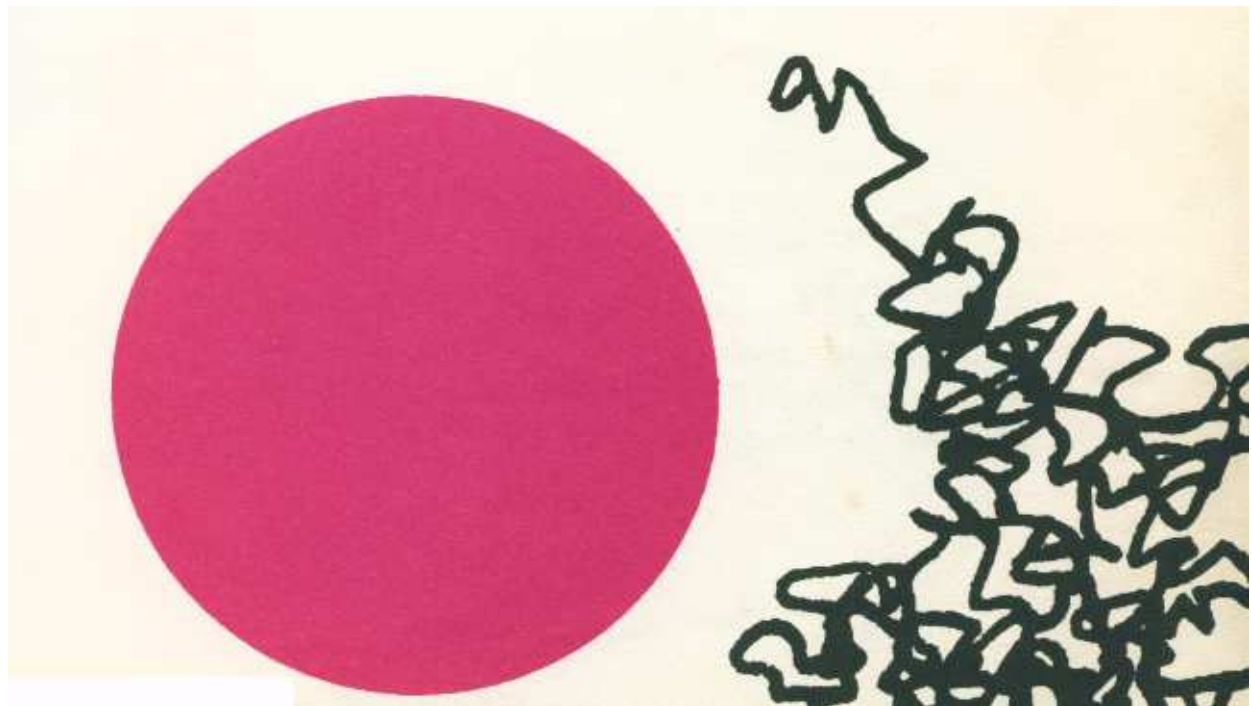
The squiggle, taken by surprise, did the best he could.



"Is that all?" she demanded.

"I guess so," replied the miserable squiggle. "That is, I suppose so. What I mean is I never know how it's going to turn out. Hey, have you heard the one about the two guys who —"

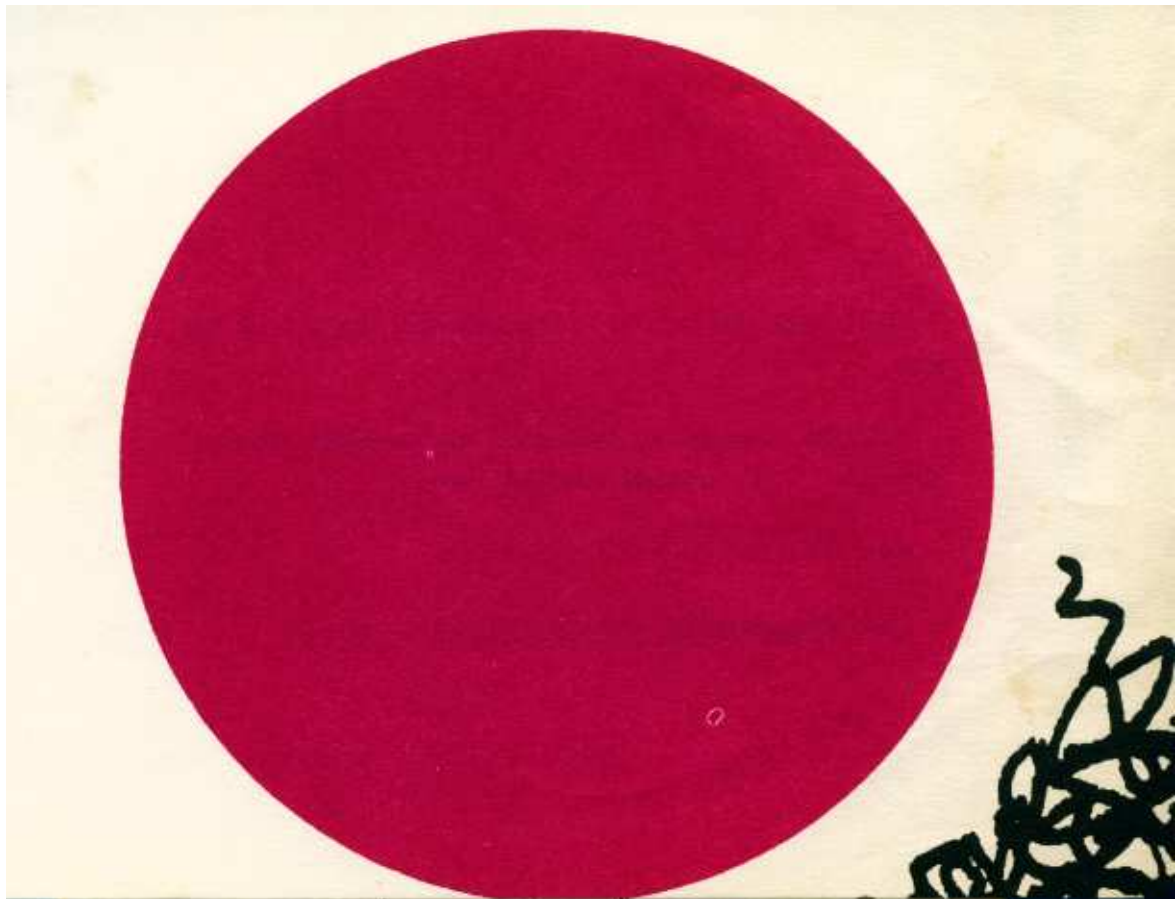
The dot wondered why she had never noticed how hairy and coarse he was, and how untidy and graceless, and how he mispronounced his L's and picked his ear.





And suddenly she realized that what she had thought was freedom and joy was nothing but anarchy and sloth.

"You are as meaningless as a melon," she said coldly. "Undisciplined, unkempt and unaccountable, insignificant, indeterminate and inadvertent, out of shape, out of order, out of place and out of luck."



With that she turned to the line and shyly took his arm.

"Do the one with all the funny curves again, honey," she cooed softly as they strolled away.

And he did.

And soon they did, and lived —

if not happily ever after, at least reasonably so



*Moral: To the vector belong the spoils.*

*Acknowledgments*

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Tug of War — *The Bettmann Archive*  
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Gift of Harry Payne Bingham,  
1937*  
Cosmograph — *Photo-Lettering*  
Klee: Little Jester in Trance — *The Thinking Eye*, by Paul Klee,  
The Documents of Modern Art  
Series, Vol. 15, published by  
George Wittenborn, Inc., 1961  
Spider Web — *Courtesy of the American Museum  
of Natural History*  
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"Complex" — *Scripta Mathematica*  
"Enigmatic" — *Scripta Mathematica*